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ABSTRACT

Relevent, locally-controlled educational programs play key roles in rural development in developing nations. Education has a desirable controlling influence over development of the rural individual, family, community, and society, leading to reduced poverty, income equity, and controlled unemployment. The failure of trickle-down development and recognition of the importance of rural areas and rural people to the economic emancipation of developing countries has given education a key role in rural systems of supply, production, marketing, personnel maintenance, education, health care, and governance. Functions of education include imparting social change, improving individual social position and standard of living, activating participation in rural and cultural development, increasing critical abilities of rural people to diagnose their needs, assert their rights, and take greater control of decisions affecting their lives, providing trained manpower in rural areas, linking rural and urban sectors, providing employment and income opportunities, increasing labor force productivity, and developing leadership. Education oriented to urban rather than rural needs may do more harm than good by accelerating rural to urban migration, generating youth unemployment, and leaving students ill-equipped to succeed in a rural environment. Education contributing to rural development must be locally controlled, practical, applied, problem-posing, and focused on functional specialization. (LFL)

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ROLE OF EDUCATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A KEY FACTOR FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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ROLE OF EDUCATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A KEY FACTOR FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

I was brought up in a typical rural setting in Sri Lanka and progressed through my education so that I could be an asset to me, my family, my community, and to my society. Because of my rural background and vested interest in the welfare and development of rural poor, I visited many parts of rural Sri Lanka on formal and informal fact finding missions. One of the most significant experiences I gained through these missions is that rural people acquire their ability to substitute good practice for bad through a learning process, which is most effective under well organized and planned teaching. I found from my own experience as well as through other educated personal from rural background that education has a desirable controlling influence over the development of an individual, a family, a community, and a society as a whole in a rural environment. This chain of development could lead to reduce poverty, gain income equity, and control unemployment at sectorial and regional levels. Based on this analogy, it occurred to me that an introspective examination of my experience could provide some food for thought for those who are seriously involved in bringing up a self sustained growth and development in rural areas in many developing countries (Wangoola, 1984). Thus, I am inspired to present my thoughts on the role of education in rural development in this paper.

Rural development defined.....

The greater proportion of people in the world live in rural environments. The contribution of rural areas to the national economic development is usually limited; however, the future potential for the contribution is great, especially in developing countries. Therefore, rural development will become a key factor during the next decade or so in the overall economic development of many developing countries. The

World Bank (1975) defined rural development as a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people-the rural poor. Accordingly, it involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those live in rural areas. This group includes small scale farmers, tenants, and landless.

The definition of rural development implies that rural development is not only concerned with increased income per capita of people living in those areas, but also includes the reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality, and unemployment among the rural folks. Therefore, rural development must be considered as an overall economic development strategy, if a larger proportion of the rural people are to benefit from the development. The post war years experiences has proved beyond doubt that the so-called "trickle-down process " based mainly on town-oriented economic development programs in developing countries has failed to contribute to the improvements on socio-economic conditions of the rural poor. The rural poor must therefore be reached directly if they are to share the benefits of any economic development in a developing country.

Rural areas experience with.....

Universally, rural areas experience wide varieties of social, economic, political, and moral problems such as lower per capita income, lower educational level, fewer employment opportunities, limited educational and cultural facilities, confined social environments, migration, less developed health services, fewer commercial facilities, declining small towns, and less confidence in the future prospects. In the past, many governments have made a number of effort to develop their nations' economies through urban-oriented development programs. However, those development effort were focused based on consumer buying power in the big cities, thus depriving many economic opportunities for citizens of rural areas (Stephens, 1985). In fact, the social, political, and economic gap has increased year by year between the town and the rural areas. However, lately many donor agencies and development planners have realized the importance of rural areas and the rural people in the economic emancipation of many countries, especially the poor developing countries (Kalra, 1985).

Factors affecting rural development.....

Rural development is dependent to a large degree on the ability of entrepreneurs to bring together human creativity, capital, education, natural resources, and social and economic infrastructures in an economically rational manner. This implies that there are a wide range of variables playing major roles, independently as well as interdependently, in the process of rural development. There is no single factor which would alone be responsible for rural development. Each factor has its own contributions and limitations in its development function. This paper is mainly concerned with the function of educational component in rural development. Thus the major objectives of this paper is to analytically describe the major role, positive as well as negative, played by education in rural development, which I learned from my real-life experience.

Education as a component in rural development.....

A typical rural system is characterized as having seven functional components, related to each other through a linkage of infrastructures, and all set into a social, political, economic, religious, cultural, and physical environment (Nytes & Musegades, 1985). The functional components are supply, production, marketing, personnel maintenance, education, health care, and governance (Miller & Merritt, 1985). A change in any of these components affects all the other components and all aspects of the rural syst However, I strongly support that education component plays a unique role as facilitator of transactions for all linkages, and serves to enhance frequency, fidelity, and capacity of the linkages in the rural development processes.

Education means.....

Education can be divided into formal and non-formal. Coombs and Ahmed (1974) defined a non-formal education as any organized , systematic learning activity undertaken outside the framework of formal school system to provide selected types of learning opportunities to particular sub-groups in the population (adults and children). They defined formal education as an institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured educational system spanning lower primary school to upper reaches of

the university. It is clear that different forms of education result from different socio-economic and political systems of a country. The diverse types of society whether patriarchal, slave-based, feudal, capitalist, or socialist have systems of education which differ from each other in varying degrees (Fagan & Hughes, 1985). Accordingly, in traditional societies, the elders hands down knowledge what the younger generation need to know to ensure their livelihood and the continuity of their family, clan, and tribe. Although the traditional society has no school this does not mean that it has no education. In progressive societies, however, the rate of change and the growing complexity of the production process are such that education becomes institutionalized and the schools are symbols of a developing society. Since the main purpose of formal and non-formal education is to impart behavioral knowledge to its immediate clientele the term "education" has been used as a common term throughout this paper for informal as well as formal education.

Role of education.....

Education has long been recognized as a potential means for rural development. In many developing countries, education has been seen as a panacea for national development (Hegtvedt-Wilson, 1984). The education system is considered as a key factor in the rapid sectorial, regional, and national development in many developing countries. I am convinced by my experiences that a well supported, easily accessible educational system is an efficient means to make people economically conscious, and therefore, make them to actively participate in their economic prosperity and cultural advancement. In spite of the negative role education played in some countries, rural development planners and leaders still believe that education is a primary means to promote social and economic development among their citizens (Kindley, 1985).

Education is both the product of society as well as an important tool for bringing about changes in the rural community. There is a dialectical relationship between education and society. Rural development and educational development are inseparable. Education encourages involvement of individuals from the cradle to the grave in imparting knowledge. Thus, all citizens are well aware of the importance of education for their life. As an educator, I insist that education should be given a first and foremost place in the services of a democracy which demands not only that the people be protected against arbitrary decisions but also that they take part in decisions making process which affect the future of their society.

As mentioned earlier, education is a key factor for rural development. Education should be focused on long term goals as well as short term tactics in developing of an individual, a community and a nation as a whole. In every society, different forms of education produce different culture. In my opinion, particularly under a rural context, education appears to be the only way of imparting a social change and hence improve one's social position and standard of living. Any man/women who has received a good education will seek to improve his/her standard and style of life and to develop his/her personality by optimally using his/her knowledge in interacting with other people. In a rural setting, the basic needs of human life such as food, shelter, education, information, health care, quality of life, and preservation of natural resources call for mobilization of all human intelligence and energy. These are fundamental principles on which the following paragraphs describe the role of education in rural development.

Education as a principal development strategy: Many development economists apparently believe that education is a primary means of promoting economic development in rural areas. Many insist on a need to change the form of the educational system to make it more appropriate to their national priorities (McGranahan, 1984). In my opinion, any person who has received an education will make an effort to improve his/her way of life and to develop his/her intellectual personality by making reasonable use of his/her educational experience. We have seen in the past that many children from rural areas have become professionals thanks to educational facilities provided them, and they have been named as "model person" not only for their immediate community but also for the other communities. Thus, we have enough evidence that education is a principal development strategy not only for individual development but also for rural or regional development.

Education makes people conscious: Rural areas are today faced with a host of social, economic and political problems. These problems have significantly out paced the rate of growth in industry, trade, agriculture and education. Despite greater government efforts in the development of rural areas, the gap has widened between the urban and the rural areas. This imbalance is a factor in the political stability of many developing countries. I have observed that a well supported, easily accessible educational system was an efficient means to make people conscious, and therefore activate participation in rural and cultural development. When people become conscious about their environment, their way of life, they will be en-

couraged to participate in rural development programs. Rural people's participation is of vital importance for rural development.

Education helps increase functional ability of rural people: Over the years, education has come to be viewed not only in terms of filling basic intellectual gaps, but as a way of strengthening peoples' critical abilities which enhance their capacity to diagnose their own needs, assert their own right, and have greater control over the decisions that affect their lives. The ability to think and act arouse greater political consciousness in people and in turn, leads them to center their actions on behalf of their communities.

Education provides trained manpower from rural areas: Rural development requires educated manpower with a rural background. But, undoubtedly, almost all the rural areas or regions in developing countries are desperately short of highly trained manpower with a rural background. It is also important to have enough manpower for specific occupations in rural development activities. Obviously, rural development is calling for advanced educational preparation at the rural cultural understanding level. The obvious reasons for limited supply of trained manpower is the shortage of quality schools in rural areas. If more schools are built, it is assured that they will contribute to greater cultural understanding and a larger supply of trained manpower for rural development from rural areas (Phan-Thuy, 1985). Generally a higher level of rural cultural understanding along with a larger supply of skilled manpower may very well stimulate rural economic development. It is a fact that only rural schools can provide in larger number the needed skilled manpower with rural cultural understanding.

Education Links rural and urban sectors: Education helps rural people to modify their physical and social environments and to make steady progress in meeting their needs. No rural community or rural development program based exclusively on self-help activities is isolated from urban sector or the nation. Education ties both rural and urban sectors through change in attitudes, behavior, and skills of rural people. Education prepares rural people to face the transitional change from rural to urban areas. Experience shows that educated rural people have less adaptation problems in urban environments. Rural development occurs as a result of involvement of both rural and urban sectors in complementary activities. The interdependence of education and the cultural framework is a major factor for social change. Usually schools take the major responsibility for social change between rural and urban sectors.

Education provides employment and income opportunities: Education must be a vital element in providing employment and income opportunities for rural residents. A rural development goal is to improve the well being or standard of living of rural people by increasing income earning opportunities in rural areas. The role of education in rural development is prominent by its impact on employment and income. Increasing the quantity and quality of education in rural areas can significantly attract private as well as public investors into those areas. Numerous studies have shown that local markets, availability of trained labor, raw materials, and transportation are factors of prime importance to industrial managers in selecting a community location for industrial plants. The interaction of job development with rural education constitutes the whole economic progress in rural development.

Education increases productivity of rural labor force: In accordance with technological and organizational progress, the quality of rural labor force must also be improved so that new skills can be combined profitably in production activities. Indeed, the greater skills knowledge has become an important factor in raising productivity per unit capital and labor input in both rural and urban areas. Educational facilities in rural areas increase the availability and use of human resources. Human resources are neither capital, nor income, nor materials resources, but they are the ultimate basis for the wealth of any region or area. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production. But, human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic, and political organizations, and undertake development. Clearly, education has the ability to develop human resources in rural areas. In fact, rural development is dependent to a large degree on the ability of entrepreneurs to bring together human creativity, capital, natural resources, and social and economic infrastructures in a rural setting.

Education develops leadership: Education in the widest sense is in fact both an investment and a form of consumption which increases an individual's capacity for production while at the same time develops his/her personality and satisfies his/her need to know and understand. The rural world will need competent and dynamic leaders if it is to win the battle against hunger and poverty and succeed in rural development. Education helps to develop and identify leaders in a rural community (Martin, 1984). Rural leaders have the ability to look to the future not only for their community development but also for their

personal development. Usually leaders in rural areas play a leading role in rural development, to the extent that they have the support of the people and the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience for such work.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper describes the most important role of education in rural development. In fact, rural development, as a process, depends on a large number of variables of which education is one. Education should be placed first and foremost in the services of democracy, which demands not only that the citizen be protected against arbitrary decisions but also that he/she take part in decisions which affect the future of his/her society. More often than not rural development cannot take place until institutions and peoples' attitudes have changed. Education is a very important factor to bring about this change in rural environment. As mentioned earlier, there is a dialectical relationship between a society and education, that is, education is both the product of society and, in certain circumstances, a factor which brings about economic development.

By and large, the low standard of education among rural people can be explained partly by difficulties inherent in the rural environment, and partly by the negative belief that rural development can be achieved without educating the rural residents. My experience in rural development activities show that education has a role to play in rural development and is therefore directly related to the well being of large number of rural people. The useful role education played in the past in rural development clearly suggest that education should be incorporated as an important factor to bring about rural development in developing countries.

Although education is an essential weapon in the battle of rural development, it alone will not determine the outcome. Development requires other resources in addition to education. Sometime education fails to contribute its share to rural development. This is because the different forms of education result from different socio-economic systems. Based on this difference, the various forms of education socialize and reproduce culture which, in turn, determine the degree of success of rural development. In many countries the prevailing educational system has in fact induced employment problem and in some instances even has hampered rather than helped the cause of development (International Labor Organization, 1980).

Education oriented on urban needs has accelerated rural to urban migration and has not done much in developing rural areas. The colonial type of elementary, secondary and college education in many countries has created white collar employment expectations which are often difficult to meet and has also distorted the concept of education for rural development. Because of this type of educational programs, youth unemployment rates have alarmingly increased in rural areas in many developing countries.

A major weakness in the educational system in developing countries is in preparing students for next stage of study. This leads to emphasis on examinations which measures only the knowledge necessary to pass paper-pencil tests, but with little concern for preparation of the individual for the rural life he/she is likely to lead. The pupil who terminates one stage and does not proceed to the next is ill prepared for employment or even the ability to live a full life within the limit of his/her circumstances. National educational planners in many countries have formulated new educational policies on the basis of implicit or explicit assumption that available manpower will be absorbed into productive activities, provided that right qualifications are obtained. But those so-called "new educational system" have created more problems than the traditional systems.

In many countries, especially in Asia, large scale, centrally controlled book and blackboard education have failed to serve the rural children. The fact is that education will not contribute to any rural development without appropriate planning and implementation of the whole educational system. I have observed that in general the educational systems is controlled by those who have economic, social, and political power. This is a big bureaucratic bottleneck in developing rural areas. Thus, control of power is very crucial in conducting education for rural development. Education controlled by the rural people will lead development. Education controlled by outsiders tends to depress rural development.

In spite of the above controversial arguments, victory in the world drive to achieve the basic objectives of human needs, that is, to provide food, shelter, education, infrastructure, health care, improve quality of life, and conserve natural resources, calls for utilization of all peoples' intelligence and energies. Since human being continue to learn, education is generally regarded as a potential instrument for rural development. It is true that if education is locally controlled, practical, applied, problem posing, and focused on functional specialization, it can and will contribute to rural development in developing countries.

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